

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9183

S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 2102

LIMDIS

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: AEMR PFOR MOPS CB

SUBJECT: FOREIGN COMMUNITY DEVELOPS MILD CASE OF NERVES

1. SUMMARY: THERE IS EVIDENCE OF SOME GROWTH IN MALAISE ON THE PART OF DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES WHO INEVITABLY TURN TO US FOR REASSURANCE OR GUIDANCE. OUR REGULAR REASSURING RESPONSE IS TO SOME DEGREE NECESSARY TO AVOID THE SPREAD OF CONCERN TO THE KHMERS. END SUMMARY.

2. ALTHOUGH THE MILITARY FRONTS APPEAR TO HAVE STABLIZED FOR THE MOMENT, THE EFFECT OF CONTINUING ENEMY ROCKET ATTACKS ON POCHENTONG AIRFIELD IS BEGINNING TO BE FELT AMONG THE RESIDENT FOREIGN COMMUNITY. THERE IS AWARENESS OF THE FACT THAT WITH THE INDEFINITE SUSPENSION OF AIR VIETNAM FLIGHTS, ONLY AIR CAMBODGE IS SERVING PHNOM PENH ON INTERNATIONAL SCHEDULE, AND EVEN THAT AIRLINES TENDS TO CANCEL SOME OF ITS FLIGHTS ON DAY-TO-DAY BASIS. TWO AIRCRAFT, ONE MILITARY AND ONE CIVILIAN, HAVE SO FAR BEEN TOTALLY DESTROYED AT THE AIRPORT, AND SEVERAL OTHERS HAVE BEEN DAMAGED IN VARYING DEGREES. WHILE FANK IS MAKING CONSIDERABLE EFFORT TO ELIMINATE ROCKET LAUNCHING SITES NORTHWEST OF THE AIRPORT, THE ROCKETS CONTINUE UNABATED.

3. AGAIN, WHILE THE NUMBER OF ROCKETS FALLING ON EASTERN PARTS OF THE CITY FROM EAST BANK LAUNCHING SITES

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HAS DECREASED IN THE PAST FEW DAYS, THERE HAVE STILL

BEEN HITS ON HOSPITALS AND OTHER TARGETS IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS. THE KC HAVE BEEN BROADCASTING APPEALS TO FOREIGN DIPLOMATS TO LEAVE THE CITY NOW OR FACE THE CONSEQUENCES (FORTUNATELY MOST FOREIGN EMBASSIES DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO FBIS REPORTS ON KHMER ROUTE BROADCASTS.)

4. NERVOUSNESS AMONG THE FOREIGN EMBASSIES HAS BEEN SHOWN IN FOUR ENCOUNTERS OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS. FRENCH CHARGE PAVEC SENT HIS MILITARY ATTACHE OVER URGENTLY ON FEBRUARY 1 TO SOUND OUT OUR DEFENSE ATTACHE ON OUR VIEWS OF PROSPECTS FOR THE AIRPORT AND DESIRABILITY OF EVACUATION OF AT LEAST SOME OF THE RESIDENT FRENCH COMMUNITY. I WAS APPROACHED SEPARATELY ON FEBRUARY 2 BY THE MALAYSIAN AND INDONESIAN CHARGES FOR LONG AND EARNEST DISCUSSIONS ON CURRENT MILITARY PROSPECTS OF THE GKR. ON FEBRUARY 3 THE AUSTRALIAN CHARGE CALLED ON ME TO RAISE THE SAME QUESTIONS.

5. IN EACH CASE THE DEFENSE ATTACHE AND I RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT WE ARE NATURALLY WATCHING THE SITUATION ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS, THAT WE SEE NO CAUSE FOR ALARM AT THIS TIME, AND THAT WE CONTEMPLATE NO CHANGE FOR NOW IN OUR PRESENT POLICY OF RELATIVELY FREE INGRESS AND EGRESS FOR OFFICIAL VISITORS AND FOR OUR OWN DEPENDENTS.

6. THIS PERIODIC REASSURANCE ON OUR PART TO OUR SOMETIMES JITTERY COLLEAGUES CARRIES WITH IT SOME IMPLIED DEGREE OF RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD THEM, DEPENDING UPON FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS. WE HAVE ASSUMED THIS RESPONSIBILITY IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT ANY LACK OF SUCH ASSURANCE ON OUR PART TO OUR COLLEAGUES COULD OPERATE QUICKLY UPON THE MORALE OF THE KHMERS, BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PUBLIC. IN SHORT, WE ARE MAINTAINING A STIFF UPPER LIP-CUM-SANG FROID PUBLIC STANCE, WHILE REMAINING PERFECTLY AWARE OF THE VERY REAL CONCERNS FELT BY MANY HERE CONCERNING THE DANGERS INHERENT IN THE PRESENT PRECARIOUS MILITARY SITUATION.

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